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Grimoire

La Salle University
Spring 2001
Volume 38

Cover Image:
Nick
Justin Torrey

Grimoire

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Foreword

Another year at La Salle draws to a close. Every one of them seems to move a little faster and this, my last, has been quite a roller coaster ride. There's going to be a lot I'll miss. I know when September rolls around I'll feel that expectation I felt at the beginning of every year at school, and it will be hard to convince myself I won't be heading back to North Philadelphia. Everything about my college experience, positive and negative, has been a great inspiration for my writing and my life, and I know from reading a lot of the writing in this issue that I'm not alone. To those of you with time left, enjoy it. To those whose time has run out, see you on the other side.

*Nick Scorza,
Managing Editor*

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Nebraska

sometime when time doesn't matter we'll place each space
wherever it fits take time to decode each glance we've stolen
away these past few days..inside my memory's thick with
unconsidered signs & symbols/words bleed into lines more
fluent than any truth I could ever express to you; each new
choice another step down a road of excruciating
opportunity.

I take no time for anything and have nothing to show for my
time.

David Vine

Lilacs and Daffodils

if lilacs bloom in frigid FEBRUARY^v
and the daffodils sprout in the depth of
DECEMBER

the rose petals hover above our feet and heads
they dance with sleep's ambrosia
i dreamt of the strangest things

trimming tasty tangerine trickery
clovers crave curious concentrated conversation
violets vivaciously vent vibrant violence
magnolias mindlessly meander mockingly

i watch rainbows frolic across the sky
signaling the entrance or exit of the sun
and coming out after a refreshing rainfall
the wind stirs the granite leaves into tangent
twisters
the fire cracks the cold shattering shards to the
earth

your eyes are shining bright with excitement
the news of the fork running away with the spoon
sends the tabloids to tell the world
the knife is left alone with the plate

whispers come over me
entering into the depths of my soul
coming from all directions
pulling me where it is forbidden
away from what i am "supposed" to do

but the lilacs are blooming in frigid FEBRUARY

the daffodils sprout in the depth of DECEMBER
the dandelions dance their deception
as i dreamt of such marvelous things

Cindy Lett

Sweet Figs

Crammed with rows of seats, it was, the little book shop, because they were having a book-signing. There was no room to walk round at all, so I sat down at the end of the front row from where I could at least lean over and reach the shelves to browse. The rows filled up, mainly with women, and then straight away the writer came out, sat on the edge of the table with his legs stretched right out in front of him and lectured brilliantly. So far so good, his oratory. Crossed, they were, his legs, and I could see a fine bulge between them on the right side with the fabric of his trousers stretched over it, cotton cloth that gleamed with the strain and the stretch of it. Oh, frottage of the eyes, it was lovely to look at and then I couldn't hear what he was saying for dreaming of taking his big fingers into my mouth and he pushing them in. I wonder would he? Of course not, no. I wouldn't, either. Sure we all have our ethics as well as our fantasies. But I won't pretend it wasn't there. I wanted to keep on looking, just to keep on, but without him knowing. Tricky it was, to let my eyes go down there knowing he might catch me looking, exulting in it, oh, fine shape, sweet figs of the darling tree, and that droning air conditioner behind me sucking the sex smells out of the room the whole time.

Just for a moment I wanted to run my fingers over that tight cloth and feel the strain under them expanding and moving up towards me and the warmth and the light. What harm to think it? Only good - it made my blood pound with a grand fizz up and down the length of me something marvelous. Some of us would run across hot coals for that feeling, but I don't buy hardbacks.

I wonder what does he dream of with his eyes, though? A sea of breasts heaving voluptuous all around him? Yes, breasts. We let them see our breasts clearly all the time, the curves of them standing out in full view, nipples too, sometimes. One of our own little foibles. We know the sight of our breasts excites them. We roll our hips at them every day of the week too, our thong undies giving us the smooth lines all the way down and that articulating roundness behind. Why can't we gaze at their bulges as well? It would be just a matter of reciprocal courtesy - we show you ours and you show us yours. But they deny us the same tonic - those trousers are purdah. They hide their best parts. Men always know what they are getting with a woman in that way. They know

whether they are getting a busty one or not, and they've usually had a good look at the hips, too. But what have we got to go on? We don't know what we are getting until it's too late, at the last moment when they suddenly push it right up at us. Men look terrible naked – the ones I've seen, anyway, but that bulge thing is one they have got going for them. The sight of it is surely as rousing to us as our breasts and bottoms are to them. It shouldn't be allowed, the way they hide themselves completely like that except for the times when you get an accidental glimpse and catch your breath gratefully for the fat swell of the thing right up there in front of your eyes for a change. If I saw more of that maybe I wouldn't be quite so taken with it when I got a rare sighting. I want more.

I got more sitting next to that student where the chairs are close together in room 103. I didn't need to look down there then. I swear I wasn't even remotely curious about him, but every time he turned to say something or just to laugh in that slow way with his mouth open, his breath made the taste buds in my mouth stand right on end. Some chemical in his mouth locked on to some chemical in mine, so I opened my mouth wider and laughed back, drinking in all his buzz at the same time. He knew, of course, looking at me mysteriously. He was saying one thing, his eyes saying another. Probably inhaling mine the same, just as keen. He was old enough, but I wasn't going to break my golden rule for him. Anyway I don't think he realized that he could have said yes to me. You'd need to spell it out with the buttons of your blouse coming undone or some other trick or else he'd have to come to you after he'd loosened up with a drink, even though he is the sort who would have to fight the women off. His male smell is strong. I wonder if he knows that he doesn't have to do another thing, only breathe on a woman and she's gone. But with some men you just couldn't; you couldn't trust them to keep their mouths shut about anything. The effect of their smells always comes as a complete surprise to me, but all I care about looks is that I like a man who looks like someone who could keep his mouth shut.

I ran into one I hardly know in the cafeteria then who must have just taken off his jacket or something. He stopped to say hello, and we weren't even standing close, and there he was in his shirt and I wasn't attracted to him in any way but then just one little waft of his deep, dumpling smell just shot out at me and the vim leapt immediately and the taste buds went on end, rioting all over again. Whatever he said to me after that I don't know. I was trying to look cool. There was nothing about him to get me, but there I was deep in the thrall of his scent, saying the usual polite

good byes and having this insane impulse to press up against him right in the middle of the cafeteria. Oh, terrible, terrible, of course it soon passed off and I was fine again. I wonder does it hurt us, though, all this pretense, all this denial? Not that I mind going along with it, we all do, we have to of course. A divorce lawyer told me once that alcohol opens an awful lot of women's legs. That was exactly how he put it. He'd seen a lot of it, he said. I thought he was crude at the time, but now I'm glad he told me. It's reassuring to know that the drink just makes people act on all this electrical stuff that's hitting them constantly from all sides. You'd think we'd be more forgiving when people give in at last.

Yet another one I know asked me how my friend was. I said she's all on her own over there, why don't you head over and say hello to her, she'd love that, the company. I know she likes him. I said she'd be glad of the company, so pointedly, just like that. You'd think he'd understand, but no. He never went over. A terrible fool of a man, God forgive me, to be blind to such a broad hint. Of course he's lonesome, too, but he just wouldn't dare in broad daylight. Isn't that a terribly pity? I can't understand how a man can be so meek, so inactive. I like to be aggressive, myself. I like a man to be that way, too. Urgent but controlled. But I often wonder why they walk around pretending it doesn't exist; pretending to be dead from the chin down. It must give them an awful skewed view of the world. Are they serious, I wonder?

But that professor who was wearing the same sort of trousers as the writer had a pretty good bulge quite far down his thigh, surprisingly far down. In full view, he was, standing right in front of us. You don't see it often. He must be big, he dresses on the right the same, such a quiet man, too. But he saw me looking and retreated behind the table right away. Funny him knowing like that. They must be on the watch. Perhaps they have secret workshops on it: "How To Avoid the Lascivious Eyes of the Lolitas and the Barbies," workshops held in secret like illicit sex. The Lolitas, yes. It was never her fault, being so young. Another one told me in passing that he was immune to women in that way. At least he admits it's there. Big hearted he thinks that being married will save him. I laughed quite openly, honest like himself. What a boast. He's surrounded by women and courts their friendship. He goes round touching them with brotherly love. They like it; he's one of these affectionate platonic people that some women seem to trust. I don't. I just wonder exactly why he shambles around in that territory like a little cub, pretending to be fearless and thinking he's the envy of wiser men who watch and pray. You women are not as complicated as you think you are, he laughed to

me. He actually said that. I didn't answer; I mean I answered with my sphinx smile. I don't know whether he recognized it, though. I wonder what he dreams of too, encircled around with all those smiling uncharted receptacles of his little-brotherliness. I wanted to ask him if any woman had ever really gone after him. I might if I get the opportunity. Ask him, I mean. He wouldn't stand a chance if some lusty one decided it was a good time of the month for her to pick Mr. Bonhomie like a ripe plum and eat him all up for the good of her raging hormones. Perhaps the women leave him alone because he is so trusting. But the sisterhood won't scruple forever, he can be sure of that. You don't see many women throwing buckets of cold water over themselves these days. He's right off his guard thinking there are no Lolitas out there. Most of us know there are reasons we're at least meant to be watching and praying. At the very least meant to be. Oh, vulnerable, we can all be seduced. There are no exemptions. None at all. Not one.

No Eternity

Such a fragile thing,
This English language.
Thi
s poem
wi
ll not ex
ist past
to
da
y

Christopher Schwartz

Ashtray

I love the smell of a heavy ashtray
It's almost
Sickening
Like your face, in the moonlight
As I drift along the bar
Dreaming of
Home
And your decaying hands
Six feet
Underneath me

Julianne Burke

Remembering Senior Prom

The roses upset her. Mary Dunbrook has been married for thirteen years, and this is the thirteenth year in a row that she has gotten a dozen red roses for Valentine's Day. The card attached reads, "I love you, Ron," the same exact words that the other twelve Valentine's Day cards had written in them. She wonders each year if Ron actually takes the card back before she throws out the flowers and uses it again the next year. Romantic recycling.

Mary finds herself whining to her bedroom mirror again. *I'm not asking for much. Just a little thought. Some care. A little originality, creativity. The things I give him.* She goes into her bedroom closet and pulls out an old wooden cigar box marked "Pictures-Letters." Sitting down on the bed, she takes out all the contents of the box and fans them across her comforter. Amid the yellowed letters and faded pictures is a single Polaroid with "Senior Prom '82" written across a small piece of masking tape that has curled at the edges. She smiles and holds the picture close to her face, giggling. A younger version of her— thin, shiny, grimacing beneath the bandage over her broken nose—stands sheepishly beside a pimple-faced, gangly Michael Davidson. The darkened scene has developed an orange tint over the years.

The memories that have always been near the surface of her mind bubble up completely and start to spill across her open eyes like a film that sends her into a dream. The bedroom disappears. Her body disintegrates and reforms in its youthful, seventeen-year-old image. She is sitting at her dining room table doing her Trig/PreCalc homework. This is Mary's old house on Fulton Street. She stands up and turns around slowly, looking around at every detail. She stares at her young, thin, beautiful body, runs her hand down her waist, over her hips and down the length of her thighs. Mary inhales deeply and the peppery-onion smell of her mother's pot roast fills her nostrils like sails caught by a wind. She drifts into the kitchen and sees her mother basting the roast. Inside, Mary is crying because she is so happy to see her mom; on the outside, young Mary smiles and asks her mom what time dinner is.

She goes back to her Trig homework and starts scribbling down a complicated equation in a few fluid motions of her pencil; inside, Mary is amazed that she was ever this good at math.

Mary is sitting and graphing an equation along three planes. The smell from the kitchen soothes her and makes her mouth water; the air is salty and as thick as gravy. She glances around at the oak china closet, the miraculous medal hanging on a small chain behind the glass, the picture of her grandparents wedged into the bottom corner of the pane. The television clicks on; it's *Press Your Luck*. *No whammies, no whammies, no whammies, come on, come on...* Oh! She hears the demonic Whammy laugh. The hum of the television is tickling her eardrums. She slams down her pencil and runs into the living room. "Dad, lower the TV for God's sake! I'm trying to do my homework." Her hands are on her hips, but she is smiling inside. Her dad looks up from his crossword puzzle, rolls his eyes, and lowers the volume. As she turns around to walk back into the dining room, the setting quickly turns white and evaporates.

As quickly as the scene fades out, it fades back in and Mary is riding her bike. It's a few days later. The wind is bouncing her ponytail against the back of her neck. She is wearing designer Jordache jeans and a purple cotton peasant shirt. Her earrings—large plastic triangles suspended from tear-shaped bases—clang against the sides of her jaw. Her sandals clomp against the bike pedals as she races along the street. She turns into a driveway near the end of the cul-de-sac. This is Ronald Dunbrook's house. It's late in the afternoon, at least enough time after school for Mary to have gone home, changed her clothes, and ridden the two miles to Ronald's house.

She is standing in the driveway, squatting beside Ronald's dad's Buick station wagon; her bike is sleeping on the lawn. The young Mary is torn apart with internal conflict: *Just ask him. Prom's in two weeks for God's sake. The worst he can say is no. But what if he does say no? You'll be so embarrassed. He'll laugh about it to his friends; someday soon you'll pass somebody and they'll snicker when they see you and you won't know why, and that'll be why. He'll make a joke out of it to the girl he ends up taking to the prom. Probably Kelly McCormack.* Deep within, the grown-up Mary is giggling about how melodramatic she was as a teenager.

Just ask him. Just ask him. Knock on the door and ask him.

Mary sits down on the lawn and hugs her knees to her chest. She is frozen with fear to the point of being inanimate. She is a mud-covered basketball leaned up against the back tire of the car.

Tears well up in her eyes after a few minutes; she feels like she's lost her voice. The front door clicks open. Without thought, Mary gets to her feet, stands her bike up and hops onto it in one fluid motion. She is pedaling across the lawn when she hears a husky woman's voice call after her, "Sweetie, please don't ride on the grass."

Turning slightly to see Ronald's mother, Mary hollers back, "Sorry." She smiles and keeps pedaling, knowing that Mrs. Dunbrook has no idea who she is and that she has no need to be embarrassed. On the way back to her house, Mary wonders if Mrs. Dunbrook saw her sitting in the driveway, if that was why she opened the front door. Mary thinks about how nice it would be if she became Mrs. Mary Dunbrook some day. Riding along, she tries to lift her front tire up to hop onto the curb. Her tire skids along the edge of the curb and the bike tips over. Mary falls to the ground with a grunt. Children playing freeze tag down the block point at her and laugh. She pulls herself to her feet, gets back on the bike and rides off quickly, her knees scraped and bleeding.

Suddenly, she is not on her bike anymore. She is at her dinner table two days later. The first thing Mary sees is herself pushing her half-finished dinner away from her. Mary's mother looks at her in disbelief, saying, "If you don't have a date, I don't see what the problem is. Now you'll both have dates. It's the answer to both of your problems." Mary's mom has been trying to convince her to take Michael Davidson to her senior prom. Michael lives down the block and they've been friends since kindergarten. Michael's mom had called her mom during the day to ask if Mary had a date to the prom yet. Mrs. Davidson told Mary's mom that Michael really wanted to go, but had no one to go with. Mary knew that was a lie; Michael would rather go to Siberia than go to a formal dance. The only reason that Michael would ever go to a prom is to be there with her; he'd been in love with her since 2nd grade.

Inside, Mary can't believe how intimidated she had been by her mother's passive aggression as a teenager. At the same time, as the argument goes on, she is trying to will herself to reach out and touch her mother's hand, just to feel what her skin feels like again, but the memory won't allow it.

Her mother is not just winning this argument. She is the only one having the argument. The most that Mary can muster is, "But..."

And her mother instantly asks her, "But what?"

And Mary answers, "...Nothing" and lowers her head slightly.

Mary's mother nods and says, "Well then, that's that." And that's that.

Now, it's the next day, and Mary is standing in front of her locker fiddling with the combination lock. On the outside, she is angry that the lock doesn't work half the time; inside she is pleased by the nostalgia of this familiar scene. The hallway smells like mothballs and chlorine. She is tugging at the lock ferociously, squealing under her breath, "C'mon, for God's sake." She jerks harder at the lock. Outside, she is pissed off and wants to get her jacket so she can go home. Inside, she is anticipating Ronald Dunbrook's approach.

"Damn locks are a pain in the ass, huh." Ronald says, smiling at Mary's profile. Mary freezes for a minute. She recognizes the voice instantly, but she is embarrassed and afraid to make eye contact. She finally looks up and says yes, the locks are a pain. She smiles and says hi. Ronald says hi, then runs his fingers through his wavy, blond hair. "So, look, Mary, I know it's only two weeks away and this is kinda last minute, but I was wondering..."

Ronald stumbles over his words for a minute or two before he finally says the words "Do you wanna be my date to the prom?" Mary smiles and says yes almost instantly. She giggles and rubs her hands together nervously. He smiles and says he's happy, that he was afraid she'd have a date by now. Her smile vanishes. He asks her what's wrong, and she explains that she already has a date, that she is going with Michael Davidson. Ronald can't believe his ears, and says, "With who?" Mary repeats the name, and says that she is doing it as a favor for Michael's mom. Ronald only knows that Michael exists because Michael is his math tutor. Ronald smiles slightly and says, "Oh, well, I understand. That's nice, I mean, to go with him like that. I wish I got to you first, but you know. I mean, I don't know. I guess I'll find somebody."

Mary's eyes fill up with tears when Ronald asks her to save him a dance at the prom. She promises to; he smiles and walks away. She struggles with her lock for a few more minutes, tears streaking her flushed cheeks.

Tears drip onto the center of her handlebars as she rides home, tiny splashes against the gray metal. Her vision starts to

cloud. Every few seconds, she takes her left hand off of the handlebars and wipes her eyes on her jacket sleeve. Inside, Mary is cringing, wincing, waiting for the pothole. As the front tire dips down into the pothole, Mary watches her young self being flung forward and tenses as the asphalt races toward her face and everything goes black.

Instantly, she finds herself sitting in her bedroom in front of her vanity. She stares at the black crescents under her nose, the large white bandage across the bridge of her nose and the large, oval scrapes on the right side of her face. She takes her hair out of its ponytail and tosses her head forward so that her hair covers her face. Inside, she smiles warmly at how pathetic she looks; it looks like she belongs on *The Addams Family*.

Mary flings her hair back when she hears a knock at the door. "Go away."

Her dad says softly, "Princess, I have something for you."

"Give it to me later." The door opens, and Mary turns to see her dad walking in with a giant teddy bear in his arms. The bear is literally as big as she is, all beige with shiny brown eyes, a big open mouth and a white bandage across its nose. Mary tilts her head and says, "Awww, he's so cute." Her dad puts the bear on the bed and she goes over to hug it.

"You said the bear's cute, right?" her dad asks. She nods up and down. "Even with the bandage on its nose?" She nods again and then thanks her dad, giving him a hug. "If you need anything, Princess, just gimme a yell." He smiles and closes the door on his way out. Mary lies on her bed and snuggles with this giant teddy bear. Inside, she is so happy: *Mr. Biggs! I almost forgot about him*, she thinks to herself. The young Mary lies there trying to come up with a name for her new teddy bear.

"Mary, this has gone on long enough! You can't miss any more school or you won't graduate. Stop being a baby and get showered." It has been a week since Mary broke her nose. A week spent in her room, mostly in her bed. She finally gets up, showers, and goes to school. The stares and the sympathetic looks swirl around her like a thick fog. She's heard the words *What happened?* over a hundred times by the end of second period.

At lunch, Ronald sits down across from her with his tray of food. He says what everyone else has said, asks what everyone else has asked, and then tells her not to forget that she is saving him a dance for the prom. He tells her that he had asked Kelly McCormack the day after he'd asked her. Mary tells him not to worry about saving him a dance because she isn't going to the prom. He can't believe that she wouldn't go just because of her nose. "It's not that big a deal, Mary. Just go and dance and have fun. There's only one senior prom. You'll regret it. I don't want to sound like I'm your mom, but it's true. Just go. It'll be something to look back and laugh at." She wants to be a turtle so she can slip into her shell and hide. *This is so embarrassing, she thinks. I'm a joke. I'm Marsha Brady. I'm just a stupid sitcom character.*

By eight o'clock on prom night, Mary has been crying for almost three hours. She is lying on her bed with Mr. Biggs. The crumpled tissues across her blue bed spread look like clouds. She is listening to her old Carly Simon albums and trying to make the world disappear. She had spent most of the afternoon fighting with her mother about not going to the prom. Her mother made the same argument that Ronald had, but focused more on the money her father had spent on the dress and the limo.

As she lies there, sulking, Mary thinks she hears knocking at her door, but is pretty sure it's just something in the music. She hears the same rhythm again, only much louder, and now she knows someone's knocking at the door. "Go away."

"Mar, it's me." It's Michael's voice.

She asks him why he isn't at the prom, and he says that he won't go without her. She apologizes through the door, and says he should go without her and just hang out with his friends and have a good time. He asks her to open the door. When she opens it, she sees Michael standing there in his tuxedo holding a bouquet of flowers. "Put on your dress," he says with a smile.

"I'm not going, Michael. I'm sorry, I really am. But I'm not going."

"Just put on your dress and meet me at my house in twenty minutes, okay?"

"I said I'm not going."

"We won't go to the prom. Just come over and hang out with me. I have this damn tux and it was expensive to rent and I'm not wasting it. And I'm sure your dress was more expensive than my tux. So just come over; we'll listen to some music and hang out."

Mary protests, but Michael won't take no for an answer. Eventually, the guilt makes her give in. He closes her bedroom door and yells through it, "Twenty minutes." She starts to get ready.

As soon as she walks out the front door, she runs down the street as quickly as she can before anyone sees how ridiculous she looks in this pretty prom dress with a broken nose. She doesn't even bother to knock on his door, she just runs inside. His mother is sitting on the couch with her Polaroid camera. Mary smiles when she sees her. "Hi. Where's Michael?"

"He's downstairs waiting for you. Go ahead on down."

Mary opens the door and walks slowly down the darkened stairway. "Hello?... I can't see anything." Halfway down the steps, the light flips on. She sees Michael standing by the light switch, smiling. The basement has been made up to look like a hall. There is one round table covered with a white tablecloth and two place settings. There are streamers across the ceiling and flowers all around the room. *I'm a sitcom character.*

She thanks Michael for what he's done and gives him a big hug. He turns on the music and they just sit and talk for a while. After about an hour, Michael's mother brings down their dinner: chicken Parmesan, one of the two choices they would have had for dinner at the prom.

It takes Michael a long time to get Mary to dance, but once she gets up, she realizes that she is very relaxed with him. They dance for hours. Michael has no rhythm and his thin arms and legs writhe like he's an insect on its back, but he's a lot fun. She feels like she's at one of Michael's birthday parties as a little girl. His mother comes downstairs and forces them to take a few pictures together by the steps. Mary takes one of them and puts it in her purse.

Sometime before midnight, Michael puts on a slow song and coaxes Mary into dancing with him. It's the theme song from their prom: "Open Arms" by *Journey*. They dance slowly, awkwardly, at

least half a foot of space between their bodies. Right before the song ends, Michael whispers, "I love you."

The only thing Mary can say is, "Oh, Michael." He tells her that she doesn't have to say anything back. Neither one of them says much for the next half-hour, then Mary says that it's getting late and she should go home and get to sleep. He walks her home and they stand on her porch and make small talk like they are about to go on a date. She leans in and kisses Michael on the cheek, thanking him for saving her night. He smiles and walks away. Mary watches him walk down the block and doesn't go inside until she sees him close his front door.

After she knocks on her parents' bedroom door to let them know that she's home, Mary lies down on her bed in her prom dress and snuggles up with Mr. Biggs. She starts to wonder if Ronald would do something as sweet and romantic as Michael did. Giggling, she imagines that, if Ronald isn't romantic enough, she can get Michael to tutor him in sweetness.

Suddenly, Mary is standing at her locker yanking on her combination lock; it's a week and a half after prom night, the day after her nose had completely healed. Ronald walks up and they have basically the same conversation as they'd had when he asked her to the prom, except this conversation ends with Ronald asking her on their first official date. Just as she is about to say Yes, she hears a phone ringing. The high school hallway dissolves and Mary is sitting on her bed holding the Polaroid of her and Michael. She is instantly aware of her chubbier, less agile, thirty-six year old body as she stretches across the length of her bed to grab her phone from her nightstand.

"Hi, Ron.... Happy Valentine's Day... They were beautiful. You really didn't have to.... Probably pot roast.... About 7:00. I'm a little behind. I've been cleaning all day.... Yeah... Yeah... I will.... You too. Bye, Babe."

Mary hangs up the phone and lies back on her bed, wondering how nice things might be if she had become Mrs. Mary Davidson.



Tina

Sandra MacLiammior

- 23 -

Dirty Jokes

Over the summer,
I ran into an old acquaintance,
one of those kids
who lived so conveniently near me
that I couldn't avoid getting close to him.

Our trust developed.
Our identities evolved.

We sat and talked for a brief moment.
He told me everything about all of his girlfriends,
everything I didn't want to hear.

I wanted to share with him
an experience I had with a woman
A moment
when our faces were as close as they could be
without touching,
and I looked into her eyes
and saw a reflection of my own face,
all the flaws, the scars, the microscopic parasitic
organisms.
She must have seen herself in my eyes,
yet we both chose not to look away.
She gave good "this."
There is no kinky sex term for it
and no way for a jester to fit it into a dirty joke.

All I did was remember this moment
I never told my acquaintance.
I just sat there smiling, nodding,
acting interested,
knowing that he couldn't read
the disgust in my face,
realizing he never knew a face.

Brian Turner

Untitled

it's raining. my face under glass occupies one dilated eye of the twin bloodshot skies. moisture falls down upon quarantined trees like misplaced similes searching for rhythm and relevance in an ocean of alliteration and metaphors. I mix my figuratives with imperative suggestives: please let her turn her eye this way. May I let the record play with my third eye's inner child after dark all bets are raised and rents are paid, spent attempts at reconciliation sit back and recommend the correct chemical end to their sad situations. I exchange recipes for emotional remedies with every last friend and enemy of unspoken epiphanies. My ear bleeds seamless dreams of unwritten symphonies. This morning I spent my last cent of sympathy to fill up an empty reflection that gazed at glass starkly.

David Vine

I didn't give him anything

Let me paint you a picture:

It's wartime in Europe, two-thirds of the way through the nineteenth century, and you're in the prime of your youth, late-adolescence, impulsive and melodramatic, hopeful and dreadful, popping boners left and right. The diminutive shadow of Napoleon Bonaparte's diminutive offspring waxes menacingly across the continent. Your dad's in the army so he's away a lot, leaving you and mom at home alone to battle the creaking floor boards and awkward language of domesticity, trying your best to get along and figure things out.

You're born and raised in Charleville, France, lost in the green and verdant flatlands of the northern Ardennes, lost a stone's throw outside Paris in one of those small-town, urban municipalities that a lot of people seem to grow up in.

You do really well in school. Really well. It turns out, you do so well that you skip through two or three grades in a year. You blow everyone else away. No one can even touch you. You're so good you're finished with school by the time you're fifteen. You're young, passionate, impulsive. You've got all these crazy dreams about running off to Paris and getting laid and getting drunk, running the streets late at night, screaming. For a couple of years, you're even writing, writing poetry. This real melodramatic, estranged adolescent, back-of-the-peechee-folder kind of poetry. It's the kind of stuff that a lot of bright kids tend to turn to at that stage in the game. You work hard at it for a couple of years. You pour your heart out across the landscape, like thawing snow running down the mountainside, except there aren't any real mountains in that part of France. For a while, writing is all that you care about, but it just doesn't work out. It doesn't work out so, at nineteen years old, you quit. You grow out of it, like most kids do. Just a phase. You turn instead to studying languages, or sailing, or something like that. You end up a professional smuggler, running food and guns and smack and ivory and stuff in and out of northern Africa. You grow up, essentially. Everyone does.

The kick:

Your name is Arthur Rimbaud. The poetry you finished writing by the time you were nineteen will turn out to be some of the most celebrated and studied works of literature ever to emerge from the country of France in the next one hundred and fifty years.

The kick, part II:

There are essentially two versions of me right now, at nineteen: there is one who hasn't really written anything of any real substance in almost a year. This one has despaired. He has practically given up. The other one has spent the last nine months or so composing this huge, baroque collection of anecdotes and stories, all interrelated. He's been composing this brilliant opus, this treatise on youth and late adolescence, on the language of college students and public transportation and headphones and cigarettes and all those things that seem so important having grown up in the small towns and urban municipalities of this country.

They're fashionable and beautiful, these stories; they're melodramatic and interesting; they're full of melancholy and addiction and hurt feelings and the like; they've got RCA-approved soundtracks with college radio-ready singles and indie film-adaptation roles for all those waning, late-90's icons like Winona Ryder and Johnny Depp. They're pretentious and riotous and full of drunken ambition. All my old friends are in them, a little better looking than they actually were, saying all the well meaning but stupid things that I want to remember them having said even though they didn't, the nature of recollection being what it is. Everyone and everything about them is just slightly more tragic, slightly more articulate and damaged, slightly more romantic. More people die in this-version-of-me's recollection of things, in these stories. More people get hurt and more people get confused and more people get over those feelings of being hurt and confused than could every actually happen in real life. More people change and grow, and learn from their mistakes. More people end up happy and more people end up unhappy than is really conceivable to believe.

It's the kind of thing where, if the first version of me were to actually sit down and read these things, or to watch them performed as a play on a stage, or as a movie, he would probably end up feeling a bit torn. He would not know whether to celebrate them or condemn them, whether to love or hate them. These are characters he knows, people he grew up with and fell in love with

and stopped speaking to, people he cared about. His memory of them is already fogged and confused as is and this clumsy reenactment of them is not helping things. He's sitting there in the darkened theater, splayed across two seats, face screwed up in thought. He feels a little bit like Lincoln might have felt the night he was assassinated if the production he was watching was actually one of those proto-nostalgic reenactments of the civil war. Strong feelings are in the air. He's nineteen. He hasn't written anything in almost a year, like I said. Arthur Rimbaud is sitting just behind him, a sly grin on his face, watching the back of his neck flex. Halfway through it all, he leans toward the first version of me to rest his arms on the back of the seat just to my right.

He says, "So, are you buying it, yet?"

I'm a little embarrassed by all this, so I just say, "It's too hard to tell, right now. Let's wait and see."

But he just leans back in his seat and fishes a cigarette out of his shirt pocket, shaking his head. "Yeah, yeah." He says, smiling. "Kids'll be saying that all night long."

The truth is, the first version of me is probably the more authentic one. There really was a period in my life, not too long ago, in which I was really starting to wonder if I wasn't on the verge of just abandoning writing myself. The idea troubled me, and I was trying, I was struggling against it, but with no real results.

This was the summer after my freshman year of college. I was living in a row house I rented with my girlfriend and some other people in north Philadelphia. My schedule looked like this: during the day I would take the subway into the city where I worked and at night I would sit out on the porch, smoking cigarettes and reading. We drank this really cheap beer that we bought by the case from this distributor in Abington where my housemate Jim grew up. Jim had driven twenty minutes to go to school here, to slip the nooses and pitfalls of youth and high school, of hometowns and of girl- and boyfriends. Jim had just gotten in his car and headed south on Route 1. I, on the other hand, had flown three thousand miles to get here, across the fucking country, and I was doing pretty much the same thing that Jim was doing, the same thing I would have been doing at home. I was getting up in the morning to go to work, I was hanging out in the city and going to shows, I was sneaking into bars and using

illicit substances, I was meeting people and liking them and meeting people and hating them, I was missing old and new and long out-of-touch friends, I was eating and sleeping and fucking and waiting, you know. I was waiting. I was sitting on the porch with Jim, waiting, cigarettes in our hands, glazed looks in our eyes, just waiting until the whole city was asleep and everyone we knew was either gone or asleep and we were asleep too and the sun was coming up and it was just about time for us to go to work again.

The way we acted, it was like there was some great flattening eminent. It was like there were dire consequences, like above-ground nuclear tests were being conducted just a couple of miles away and we could see them from our porch, the mushroom clouds; we could put our goggles on and stare directly into the light, waiting for the shockwaves to come and wipe us clean off the map.

That whole time, all I wanted to do was just start something and finish it, thinking that if I could write something about all of this, that if I could just get it down, something could be saved. There would be meaning to it all. There would be consolation, at nineteen. There would be peace.

This book/movie thing that the second version of me wrote, it all takes place in that weird limbo of the fashionably unfashionable, an outer-city island called nostalgia. It's a kind of soundstage, a sterile environment; it's an asteroid torn from the continent of North America sometime in early spring of 1994 to circle in low orbit about the Earth where these things can unfold without too much interference. Sometimes it feels a little bit like Austin, Texas; sometimes it's the Pacific Northwest; sometimes it's just New Jersey. It's a lot like these places, maybe, depending on where you're from.

They're all divided into sections, these stories, with headings like "public transportation" and "parking lots" and "thursday" and "automobiles", and that kind of thing. That's actually how the whole thing starts off. There's this little inscription at the beginning. On the first page, it just says:

"Make a list of things that you don't really need. Make a mix tape for all your friends."

Maybe you kind of understand what that's like.

One of the headings, it's called "history," it has this one scene in it where these two kids, Justin and Derrick, are talking in a diner booth late one night, talking about stories and jokes and stuff. And Justin has this one thing he heard, something that happened to his grandfather during the Second World War. His grandfather actually died before Justin was born, but he heard it from his grandmother. It goes like this:

"What happened was, my Grandpa's a pilot during World War II, right, not much older than us, and he's this scout. It's his job to fly in over Axis occupied territory and check shit out, report back on troop strength and position and numbers and stuff. So, flying this one sortie one time, he goes down. He goes down over occupied France and has to land on this farm where this French family lives. And my Grandpa, he doesn't speak French or anything, and he can't really trust these people. I mean, they're just this family, dad and mom and like two kids or something, but he can't risk it. So he marches into the house and, with his sidearm, he lines them up and kind of holds them hostage for something like two days while he's trying to fix his plane enough to get off the ground and back across the line before German intelligence figures out that someone went down out here, which he manages to do. That's what my grandma says, that it somehow worked out okay. He fixed his plane, got into the air and headed for home. The U.K. or somewhere."

The thing is, though, this story has been troubling Justin, in a weird kind of way. Even the first time he heard it. Justin and Derrick, they're talking about it, smoking cigarettes, they're getting refills on coffee. It takes them awhile, but they get around to it, finally, what the problem is: His Grandpa didn't hold those people captive, some family in France. He shot them. He took his plane down and examined the situation and did what he felt was necessary, dire circumstances and self-preservation and all. With minimal information available, this is the kind of decision he made, the kind of decision kids make, his grandfather being just kid, after all. He lined them up and killed them. Mom and Dad and the two kids, all of them. That's what happened, they decide. Death.

In the movie version of this one, they actually show the scene, the family outside in a row, mom crying a little bit and the kids looking all beautiful and French and shit. This has nothing to do with them, with anybody. But before you hear the gunshots, the frame pans left and up to this road passing nearby. Back in the

movie theater, Rimbaud leans back over the seat to tap the first-version-of-me's shoulder again.

"Check this out." He says. "Watch that road."

And the first version of me does. He squints hard to look over the hill to the dirt road and he sees something. It's him, as a boy, maybe sixteen or seventeen, spiky black hair, smoking and kicking rocks and stuff. "Wow," Says me, "is that really you?"

And Rimbaud nods. So do Justin and Derrick, in the diner. I nod to Jim on the porch, and to Amanda, my girlfriend here in Philly. Winston Churchill nods to Adolph Hitler. My mom nods to my dad.

It's 1944. It's 1868. It's 1994.

I told that story to Jim after I heard it, the one about Justin's grandfather. He liked it, he said so, just as we were leaving this bar up in the upper twenties of West Philadelphia. It was a bar that I went to a lot that summer since they don't really card there. It was between two and two-thirty, just after last call. Neither of us was terribly excited about getting back to the house so we took our time, both kind of quiet and thinking about stuff. It was August. It was warm, the both of us just kind of ambling between buildings and houses and stuff, sitting on dumpsters and kicking rocks. We were these two kids making their way west on Lombard, moving somewhere between Center City and Penn, moving but just not really getting anywhere important at the moment. We weren't really saying much.

Then, all of sudden, we saw this old guy sitting in front of this body shop, leaning up against the garage. He was wearing one of those advertising sandwich boards that businesses sometimes put on homeless people in exchange for a meal or some booze or something. He asked us if we had any change to spare.

Jim said that we didn't but I offered him a cigarette. He took it.

"Why no girls? Why no girls?" He said.

"They're out of town." I said, which was true. Everyone was out of town.

"Maybe you all have work tomorrow, then, hm? Why you all still out so late?"

"It's not so late at all." I said, "We've got all night to get home."

"Yeah, yeah." He said, "Kids'll be saying that all night long. Whatever. God bless you boys."

Needless to say, this scene ended up in the movie, too. It's a short scene that repeats later on in the film, under a couple of headings and settings. Every time the first me sees it, he feels like he's missing something, though, like what's the point. He doesn't really remember that night very well.

"Oh yeah," he called after us as we were walking away. "Mario's body shop."

And we were confused. "'Mario's body shop' what?" asked Jim.

"All your auto needs. You boys got cars or something? Mario's body shop."

Mario's Body Shop was just what it said on the sandwich board.

Kids'll be saying that all night long.

Some nights, over the course of that summer, Amanda and I would stay up late late late into the evening just smoking naked on our bed and trying to figure things out. A lot of the scenes that ended up in the second-version-of-me's book/movie just wound up as weird stories that I would try and tell Amanda about for the first version of me.

One night, after the both of us finally did get off to sleep, though, I had this dream that I was flying a plane over what I thought was German-occupied France during World War II. And my plane started to strain, of course, losing altitude, so I had to take her down on to what looked like pretty much the same farm as from Justin's story before.

But when I got there, there wasn't any French family and the house was all broken down and didn't look like it had been lived in for some time. There was a little rental car parked outside.

Walking around inside, I figured out the car belonged to Justin's grandfather. He wasn't dead, though. He was just walking around the inside of the house with his wife and kids, dragging his fingers along the old walls, and taking pictures. He was much older than me. He was reminiscing.

The kick part III:

Arthur Rimbaud isn't any deader than Justin's grandfather was in my dream. I saw him out on Lombard Street just the other day with a sandwich board hanging from his shoulders, asking people for spare change. His sign wasn't an advertisement, though. Instead, there was just something written on it. In black felt pen, it said, "Don't think this means anything."

Makes you wonder who gave him what to get him to wear that.

I didn't give him anything. I just went home and tried again to write something like that, but still, nothing really came. It was a problematic day. Dead French poets have got things pretty well figured out. The rest of us have kind of a long way to go.

2:12

I watch his body
 rise
 and
 fall
with every perfect breath
he is so beautiful
I wonder what he is dreaming about
 who is in front of him
while I stay awake all night
fearing this may be the last time
I can get
 this
 close

Samantha Russell

Mother

Love, she warned , was a dirty, filthy thing;
all men were rotters; some girls were “no good”.
For kissing a boy she would strike you down.
Puberty was the worst thing: Slow dancing
invoked sneers that cratered our landscapes. Wet
love songs ignited our flares and they shot
up to the sky, then fell down to her dust.
Sharp dirty looks bouldered all horizons.
Parched and muscular, we slid up to it;
glistening fatly we slugged towards love.
She squashed us to hell; we swelled up to heaven.
Vengefully she blew devastating holes
in flanks without any rearguards or lights.
She blasted blank terrain devoid of maps,
our guide *in flagrante*, eating her daughters.

Shellshocked, we teetered away from her sneer.
Stumbling, instinctive, we groped towards men.
We swooned to their stink right under her nose,
helpless, resplendent, lit up in her glare.
She tried to cut down her snakes as they danced,
unable to sever them fast enough.
Their inflamed pirouettes terrified her.
Jack-in-the-box swaggered up all around,
infuriating the puppet-mistress,
as we shut wallflower eyes and surrendered.
Liberals have no place back here, she screamed
in ignorant despair. Get out. To hell
with your nudity and art. You, my girl,
I have had a terrible time with you.
You’ve always had a predatory smile.

Sandra MacLiammoir

Floating

Since childhood I've been obsessed with ponds. I remember running through my family's farmland, my seven-year old limbs flailing through row upon row of tomato plants and cabbages, and then cornstalks, miles of them, pointing at the orange sky like swords, to come to the edge of the property where drainage and necessity had formed a pool of water. My chest heaving through a white cotton undershirt, I would step precariously down the grassy slope, my bare toes sinking through cold mud as I neared the dark water.

I heard nothing but my own breath and blood in that pond, a delicate, delicious, living rumbling that replaced all I heard at home. Floating, my eyes directed skyward, I could feel minnows nipping at my lolling arms as silken tendrils of my hair waved behind me like flags. I realize now how cold that water must have been, and how dirty, filled with the pesticides running down from our crops. At that age, though, I was still watching cartoons in the morning, when I could hear the TV over the din of people screaming in upstairs rooms. Run-off, cancerous chemicals, and the fronds of strange, underwater plant-life that wrap themselves stealthily around unsuspecting ankles simply were not part of my existence.

As I grew up there, the miles of cornstalks became what they really were – feet, yards, and not so tall. The land was flat and the slope toward the pond was not so daunting. As my body grew, my mind expanded to encompass the reality of pesticides, but I was not deterred. On rainy days, my parents forbade me to run through the fields, saying I'd pick up parasites through my bare feet and get pneumonia from my wet head. Even back then the Aaron farm was part of a dying race, with strip malls and housing developments eating up the marshlands and precious ecosystems. Our neighbors, the Fenwicks, who lived three quarters of a mile down the road from us, came over often to commiserate with my parents about the pressures the family farmer felt from all the development companies squeezing in from all sides.

In any case, money was tight, and doctor bills were avoided at overwhelming consequences. When Mom got gout, she dealt with the pain until Dad began resenting the absence of one more worker. It's odd now to think of the kinds of pain Mom put up

with. On rainy summer days, I dreaded the time I had to spend inside the house, subject to whatever it was I might end up hearing that day. So one day, while Mom picked broken glass from her hand and from the floor, and while Dad marched angrily to the store-shed to sit for hours polishing his hunting gear, I crept to the top floor of our big, rickety old house and shut myself in the bathroom.

I let the hot and cold water even out from the tap in the bathtub, running my fingers through the warm, steady outpour. At the small, shadowed window above the tub I heard the various pops and clinks of the hailstorm raging outside. I let the water ease its way up the sides of the tub until it almost reached the drain holes beneath the tap, and then I sunk my naked self, ankles, elbows, knees, into my makeshift pond. At eleven, I could still submerge myself entirely in the water – a revelation that pleased me to no end. Turning sideways, I would grip my knobby knees and float fetally, one eye squeezed shut below the water, the other brightly observing the smooth white side of the tub.

Easing into the heavy, rhythmic rolling of the tubwater, so unlike the placid, weightless quality of the pond, I buffered myself for the gunshots. In hailstorm, thunderstorm, or in blinding, humid sunlight, Dad would take out his shotgun after fights with Mom and shoot at things he thought he saw in the air. When I was littler than eleven, I would scream inside the house, afraid that he was killing our pretty white farm ducks. We had five – Quacker, Plucky, Lucy, Geezer, and Joe – and I remember crossing myself at every dinner should the bird we sat preparing to eat be one of my favorite pets. It never was; I would always run out to the pond on the next sunny day to find the five of them squatting and giggling and hissing.

I couldn't be sure at the time if I'd been clutching my knees so tight I made my stomach hurt, but as I prepared myself for the gunshots, I felt a nauseating swelling between my hips, a pain that rang through my abdomen and into my thighs. I released my legs to find a swirl of red-black liquid lingering between my knees. Not understanding, I squished myself to the other end of the pool, at first fearing a wolf spider had made its way through the pipes again only to curl up dead in my bath water. I watched the mass twist itself in the small waves and, looking closer, I extended my hand toward it.

The dark, satiny blob slipped through my fingers and split into smaller orbs that floated this way and that. I tried to ignore

what had become a searing pain below my gut, afraid I had given myself the flu and would have to make my parents spend money at the doctor. I crawled out of the tub and let out the water plug, watching the blobs spiral down the whirlpool drain. Gripping a towel around me, my feet padded softly down the hall to my room where I shut the door quickly and sat on my bed. I stared ahead of me, my eyes unblinking at my bedroom door, willing the pain away.

I could have been there for an hour, plopped upon my high bed, my legs dangling from my soft, pastel quilt. For all I knew, Mom was done cleaning her hand and the floor, and Dad had fallen asleep in the shed. In my trance-like determination to stop the throbbing pain, I'd ignored the warmth that spread between my legs.

“Melody!”

My burning eyes blinked back into the waking hours and I slid from my bed, the towel falling from my body. I went to pick it up from the dusty floorboards and jumped when I saw what was there.

As my mother's footsteps eased up the stairs, the boards beneath her weary feet groaning, I rushed about my room in search of my robe. In the corner of my closet I spotted a flash of pink terry cloth, and I threw the garment around me as my mother pushed open my door. With her crudely bandaged hand she slipped a stray wisp of mahogany hair behind her ear. Her eyelids looked gray, bewildered, and her mouth sat in sad lines between her puffy cheeks. When I was a teenager and out shopping at the mall with Mom, people – complete strangers – often called me the spitting image of her, to which she'd reply, “Oh, don't insult her.” Then they would smile, and we'd smile, and our chipmunk cheeks would rise and fall in unison.

My face betrayed me, as did hers. Without speaking, she plucked the towel from the floor and observed the dark red stains. I braced myself for all my names, the first, middle, and last all together meaning I was in for big trouble. My big toe made tiny circles in the dust on my floor as I waited. But Mom just got this strange smile on her face and backed out of my room. When she returned she had a sea-green plastic-wrapped package in her hand and we sat together on my bed, the plush cotton quilt brushing my calves. She told me some things about womanhood, and thankfully she left my middle name out of it. Before she left, she

gave me the package in her hand, which turned out to be a hefty set of pads. As she was walking out of my room to get the house ready for dinner, she said something motherly, I remember, something about how we both had bled that day.

* * *

For the next nine days I endured the acrid, metallic smell of myself, the burning pain resonating within me like a noose was about my waist – it bit at me, pinched my back, my thighs, plagued my stomach with nausea. I remember we all thought something was wrong with that, but the Aarons didn't waste money on doctors. My little brother Timmy avoided me, the nonsensical behavior of his older sister boggling his four-year old mind for a little over a week, every month.

In high school I was the girl who really did miss physical education classes because my period showed up about every two and a half weeks. I would vomit in the bathroom stalls, pass out behind lockers in the girls' changing room, and swoon in the fields during soccer practice on those lucky days I made it all the way to high school. Other days I curled up in my bed at home, squeezing my eyes into the back of my head, waiting for the painkillers to kick in. Mom would heat up water bottles and put them on my bare stomach, telling me to come downstairs for tea when I could walk. Sometimes the pain pills would kick in just fine and as expected, but I'd throw them up an hour later. We finally saw a doctor about this when I was sixteen.

I couldn't say much to the doctor, not much besides what I felt and when I felt it. He asked about my boyfriend and then about sexual relations, of which I indignantly stated there were none at all. I'd grown up believing that boys who touched you ended up hurting you, and I didn't know yet if I had the same kind of tolerance my Mom had for pain. My boyfriend Patrick had maintained a quiet distance from me, getting close only when we gripped each other's fingers and lay in the porch swing out front of his house. Fingers didn't do much harm; it was whole hands that hurt so much.

I remember the first time it happened, and what he said to me.

"How can you do this to me, Melody?" The pain in his eyes was enough to drive me across the room, my back against the powder blue dining room wall. "As good as I treat you?"

We didn't see each other for a long time after that. It seemed like months, but was probably just a few weekends now in hindsight. I'd call him begging forgiveness, pledging my undying devotion and making promises for things I could only then just dream of giving him. He had these crystal green eyes, so rare, the kind that changed color with the seasons. My own eyes were hazel, like Mom's, but they never changed color. At night in the summer when we ran through the fields together and floated belly-up to the stars, I watched his eyes glow gold and green and blue, changing as each constellation came into view. He didn't care about pesticides, either. Quacker or Plucky or one of the five would scramble onto the wet grass beside the pool, shake his tail and waddle uphill to find his friends, leaving me and Patrick to our stargazing, late in the night, surrounded by minnows and cornstalks. It was hard to stay mad at anyone after those kinds of nights.

Once I got on the special medication the doctor had prescribed I began helping out on the farm again on weekends and stayed for all three hours of soccer practice after school. When winter came around and the harvesting had long since been done, I went about my business with Patrick, helping him clean his father's stables. I loved the smell I carried home with me; though it leapt at me with the first stall I cleaned, I began to appreciate the bare, unapologetic smell of the horses. By the time I got around to polishing the tack, I thought the stables smelled like any other place on earth – like school, like home.

I began to develop a special interest in one of the horses, a gray dappled mare they for some reason had named Tigress. She had these big, quick, beautiful black-brown eyes, and every weekend she greeted me with a warm snuffle from her large nostrils. Patrick was lucky that he got to spend so much time with all the horses, and Tigress was lucky that Patrick's father was a nice man. She had a damaged foot and had retired from dressage events at the prime age of two and a half. People could ride her sometimes, Patrick's father told me, but she wasn't worth much. He never mentioned selling her to a dog food plant or cutting off her hooves for some rare and disgusting delicacy. She was gorgeous and had a presence stronger than most humans I'd known. Patrick would tease me, saying I spent a lot more time on her stall than on the others.

One snowy day, Patrick hustled through the stable doors and into the office, where I sat rubbing invisible blemishes from Tigress' tack. Spots of thick, white, powdery snow adorned the shoulders of his long gray overcoat, and I said he looked like

Tigress from the waist up. He sighed at me, huffing around the office, slamming desk drawers as he searched for God only knows what. I heard papers in the back room scatter across the floor and a muffled obscenity escape his young mouth.

As he came out from the back room, I smiled feebly. "Hey, calm down," I said lightly, trying to infuse my voice with honey.

He reeled around, venom clouding his eyes.

"Don't you have anything better to do than clean that damn crippled horse's shit?"

My smile dropped from my face and I felt the violent, hot throbbing erupt behind my breastbone, searing my lungs. I tried inside to suffocate myself, to weaken myself, but I already felt the nails on my fingers digging into the palm of my hand like claws. The blood accumulated below my wrist and my hand pulsated with fury. I hit him hard enough to send his body reeling backward, blood flying from his nose and lip. He staggered into the desk, one hand at his face, the other gripping a chair for balance. He looked up at me, eyes imploring, testing my restraint.

I fled the office and ran through my tears down the length of the stable. Though I feared Patrick would chase me, I still paused by Tigress' stall where she stood sleeping, one hoof curled under. I jangled the stall door and she awoke and turned her long neck slowly toward me. I searched my pockets and came out with two sugar cubes in my hand, but I saw they'd been tainted with blood from my clenched palm. Furious tears stung the sides of my face as I realized I had nothing to give her.

She swung her huge, graceful body around and came toward me, her long eyelashes blinking away sleep. She reached her neck out above the stall door and I gripped her, nuzzling my face into her dark mane, smelling nature. I brushed away the wet spot I left on her neck and gave her muzzle one last stroke goodbye. She shook her great head at me and whinnied softly as I pushed through the stable door and into the light.

My feet plodded through the snow, already four or five inches deep, with the cold moisture seeping through my shoes. I ran down empty roads, past barren farms, the freezing pellets of snow whipping at my face. I ran to the pond, skidding down the slope and falling to my knees and wrists, my hands punching through the thin sheet of ice forming a haphazard ring on the surface. I

tore off my coat and fell in, stomach down, head up and searching, straining, the ice shattering into crystalline bits all around me. My teeth chattered inside my mouth and my hair froze into strands of brown icicles. I twisted myself around and floated, my toes curling against the cold as the water soaked into my clothes. I floated there, belly-up to the snow, waiting for the constellations to come out.

To anyone living in a pretty how town

You would find it funny
to see that everyone writes your name
in lower case letters.
In the index of every poetry anthology,
In the card catalogue of every library,
your legacy is typed.

At first glance, it resembles a gun
with 2 bullets frozen in the air.
Some hit us and some don't
and some ricochet off the walls
only to later enter our heads
and go straight through our body
to our hearts.

If you were a perfect shot,
we wouldn't have any fun.

Brian Turner

The Mangler

Paul had dreamt something last night; he could only remember one part of it. He had been alone in a house, partly his own house and partly not. He had turned on the television to see the closing credits of a film rolling by white on black. A woman was singing in a language he couldn't understand. He tried to think of more, but it slipped away from him. Something about the dream had made him want to paint, but not in an inspirational sense. He felt no closer to something beautiful, no new vision of what to put on the canvas. It was just pressure, spurring him to express even when he had nothing to say. The paint was too thin on his brush, too dry; it wasn't what he wanted. He threw down his palette and turned away from the canvas. He had been using a technique a professor had taught him, waking up and painting directly, without even getting dressed. Usually it lead him to something but today it was just lines, just idle strokes he would paint over some other day.

Outside the sky was still cast-iron black. Paul showered and slid into his dress clothes. In the other bedroom Bradley would wake soon, and in a bad mood. Mark would continue sleeping until the middle of the day. They had been his college friends, and were now his roommates in his first hazy graduated year. The sky was now blue gray, with a tiny fleck of gold creeping up between the buildings. He wondered why no one appreciated the morning like he did. Even his longtime ex, Donna, an eternal go-getter, could not talk until she had her coffee. The early morning was the most personal hour of the day. If you woke up early enough you forgot who you were, or where you were, or why.

Paul reached into the silverware drawer for a spoon to stir his morning tea when he suddenly felt pain in his index finger. He had cut himself on something. Quickly he withdrew his hand from the drawer to see a little shock of red at the tip. He instinctively stuck it in his mouth, tasting the copper of his blood. He winced when he ran his finger under hot water, then put a bandage on it. He was going to be late for work. He scrambled for his things and was out the door. He tied his tie on the subway, hoping it would come out right.

He worked for a graphic design firm, cropping and cleaning up photographs on a computer. Once in a while they let him take a stab at something creative, but that was rare. Days at his job

would blur together, crystallizing into one heavy, eternal moment. Today, though, the cut on his finger made typing difficult. He thought some days of Jackson Pollock, roughly thrusting his cigarettes into his canvas. He thought of Goya, going deaf and hearing dark voices in his head. Or of Vincent Van Gogh, lost in rapture or pain, bandage on his ear. He wondered what Donna would do, if he cropped his ear for her and sent it to her. She would smile a 'you shouldn't have' at the pretty box, unwrap it delicately, and stare, and stare at him with a look of disbelief. *I didn't think you were serious.*

Art, he decided, was agony. The greatest painters endured the greatest pains, bleeding on their canvasses. They starved and struggled. They were all very far away from his stupid job, and his stupid life.

That afternoon he tried to paint again, with a wet brush, but a mind still dry as dust. He had something he was starting to like, a line with a hint of feeling and history, but he was tired from work. He didn't want to think. In the living room he heard Bradley watching TV, home from his construction job. Every day he would come home in spirals of dust, like a whirling dervish. The dust permeated everything; it would get in Paul's lungs and make him cough. He hated the way it felt on his bare feet. It embarrassed him to feel this way, it was grandmotherly of him, but it made him mad. Painting was beyond him now. He dropped his brush and went into the living room.

On TV a stick of dynamite blew off Wile E. Coyote's face. He blinked and shook it off. Bradley was barely awake on the sofa, dust was sliding off his jeans, into the cracks between the cushions. He looked up when he saw Paul.

"Man, I can't wait for bowling this Thursday. You're going down again." Bradley was the most competitive communist Paul had ever met.

"Don't you get tired of it every week?"

"No." said Bradley. He got up to take a shower. Paul sat and watched cartoons and thought about nothing. He considered it a weakness how easily entertained he was by mindless things.

Back in art school his friend Rob Gallagher had declared he would live solely for art, and shun anything that was mere entertainment. Everyone knew Rob, few people admitted to liking him. Paul kept him at an amicable distance, but he found he could no longer stand him looking down his nose at everything around him. He would only watch independent or foreign films of a certain quality; his reading list was confined to the greats only; he would only listen to classical music and free jazz, with the grudging acceptance of a few rock bands. Behind his back they called it the 'breakfast of champions,' someone even drew a picture of Rob mugging on a cereal box with sunglasses and a beret. His art remained as pretentious and unfeeling as it always had been.

That Saturday his old friend Cass Elmore threw a party at UArts. When Paul first met her, she had said her full name was Cassiopeia, and kept the lie up as long as she could. She was the first and only girl to date Paul's quiet roommate Mark. Bradley hated her.

"Another night with the Egyptian Princess? Can I bring earplugs?" Bradley complained, but he came anyway. Attempting to defend his art school friends was a lost cause with Bradley. It was the same trying to defend abstract expressionism to him at the museum. Some things he simply refused to grasp. Mark never talked about Cass, Paul still didn't know if their breakup bothered him or not. He felt strange about the party himself. It would be the first time he would be back around campus since graduating, the first time he would see anyone from school. Donna wouldn't be there. She liked the idea of artists, but Paul now suspected she found them too dirty and unpleasant in person, himself included.

When they arrived a crowd of smokers greeted them, sitting on the doorstep. Paul had missed it: the tangles of dyed dreadlocks like crests of feathers, the shared addiction. Cass met them at the door, on her arm was Rob Gallagher, swaying in her grip.

"Hey, come in, everyone come in." Cass made an elegant hostess gesture.

"Greetings," gurgled Rob as they passed.

Inside Paul found a corner where he could drink and watch and not bother anyone. Someone was having a serious discussion on the balcony, a *do you want to stay together* discussion he

thought; he could feel the weight of it through the glass. Inside people were laughing, playing stupid drinking games. He saw Rob Gallagher walking towards him; his head was wobbling slightly. It looked like the top of a chess pawn, emerging from his turtleneck sweater.

"Still painting?" he asked.

Paul nodded.

"I always liked your stuff. Hey, I've got a show at a gallery in a couple days, you should come check it out." Rob had been rehearsing that transition. "Oh," he added, an afterthought, "the gallery owner said he saw some of your stuff from school, he'd like to see about giving you some wall time also. No promises or anything."

Despite himself, Paul felt gratified. It was the best news he had received since he moved out of his parents' house. He didn't care that the message came from Rob Gallagher.

"I'll be there," he smiled and nodded.

Rob moved on when he couldn't think of a way to turn the conversation back to him. Bradley was drinking a soda, discussing or arguing something. Mark was playing a drinking game with cards that Cass had dragged him into. Paul looked out on the balcony. The couple there had finished breaking up, and it was clear for a smoke.

The air hit him and went through him, leaving him numb. Steam from his breath mingled with the cigarette smoke, as if the fire were inside him. On cold kindergarten mornings he used to pretend he was a dragon, blowing steam from his mouth like that. He wished it would just come out that easily, the fire, the whatever-it-was in him that made him paint. He wished he could exhale meaning, that his breath was art. He wasn't angry enough, he wasn't hurt enough, he wasn't beautiful enough. Jackson Pollock was sneering at him, his angry brush flinging globs of paint. Paul had smoked his cigarette to the filter. He was about to go inside when he felt a hand brush his arm.

"Hi," said a girl with green hair. He recognized her from school, two years below him, but her hair had been blue then. "Paul, right?" Paul was stunned, aware of her, suddenly, for the first time. Jane was her name. She made metal sculptures. They

talked about that and paintings and school and being out of school. They talked about parents and friends, and what happens when friends become roommates or lovers. Her hand was on his shoulder when they stood, his leg when they were sitting. She was drunk. He was also drunk by then. They were sitting against the outside wall, the cold drawing them closer together, when they kissed. He couldn't say who kissed who, they simply met and their timing was perfect.

His first kiss gave him mono, sophomore year of high school. Before that he didn't think the disease was real. Something about it seemed too symbolic of their generation. He lay in bed, weights dragging him down, weakness holding him there. Sometimes he imagined he was frozen, floating through space, his waking memories repeating over and over in his head. Their hands and heads had moved in concert, nothing awkward like he had feared. His body already knew what to do. Those lips pressed against his and forced him back, and pinned him down on the bed where he tossed and turned under their memory. He hadn't talked to her much after that, he wondered some days if he should call her, if they could be friends. He wondered where she went to college. Sometimes he stared at the phone and suddenly thought of her, and recalled her name. But it was always easier to do nothing. Their moment had been brief, and they each had their own bed to lie in.

Donna was another story. She was ever present in his head, a second being spawned from his consciousness. He had conversations with that Donna that he wished he had had with the real one. Hurt and anger he worked his way through with her ghost. Sometimes he would even forget he hadn't said those things to real Donna, that she still didn't know just how badly she hurt him.

That morning he clutched Jane's hastily scrawled name and phone number, and felt a lot of things. Guilt was one of them, he kissed someone he didn't know, someone he didn't really care about at that moment, someone that was not quite real in his cosmology. He kissed someone who wasn't Donna. He shook his head, that should not have bothered him. He sat on his bed, breathing, trying something a friend in to yoga had taught him. Sunday morning was gray and clear through the crack beneath his windowshade. No one else was up. He wondered if he should call Jane, and if he should, when, and what he would say. He

wondered what Donna was thinking, or if she was fighting with her new boyfriend, or even still with him. She went through them faster and faster lately. He inhaled deeply. His morning was shattered by Bradley stirring in the next room.

They rented some cheesy horror movie, which they often did. This one was called *Return of the Mangler*. Paul, Bradley and Mark watched as body parts flew every which way. Each victim spilled gallons of ketchupy blood, more than could ever be held in a real body. In the final scene, a man who the Mangler had left legless managed to defeat him with sheer luck and willpower. The movie left Paul somewhere between amused and disturbed. In the final scene, the legless hero crawled from the wreckage of a burning building with a disturbing, clownish arm-walk. 'THE END?' dripped in bloody letters down the screen.

"It didn't have the panache of the original *Mangler*," said Bradley.

Most of the cast had been real amputees. Paul wondered how it felt to be fitted with false limbs by special effects artists, only to lose them again for the sake of shock cinema. *People relive their losses every day, he thought, for therapy and for art.* His picture of Donna still sat unfinished in his studio. Some days he wanted to make half of it an abstract mass of angry lines.

He called Jane. She wasn't home so he left a message, which he hated doing.

BEEP "Hi Jane, it's Paul, we met at Cass' party. I was wondering if you wanted to hang out some time?" Typical, typical, typical.

He couldn't paint again that morning or that afternoon. If he played major league baseball they would be talking about the worst slump in his career. Nothing he could paint struck him with feeling. Not the feeling he wanted, just his stupid, small loneliness. He wished he had done more drugs back when he could have gotten away with it. Van Gogh smirked. Pollock sneered, contemptuous as a drill sergeant.

Jane called him. They went out to eat at an Ethiopian restaurant. Paul was a little skeptical of the lack of silverware and the flat, spongy bread that served as plate and utensil. While they were waiting, Jane handed him something.

"I made this for you,"

It was a snarling, palm-sized gargoyle made from metal scraps.

"I wasn't expecting this," Paul was completely taken aback.

"It's ok," she said, "I like to do things for people."

The food came, and was delicious, but Jane now seemed to him more foreign than anything in the restaurant. Sitting across from him was a green-haired girl who gave him gargoyles. She was 2 years younger; she couldn't even drink legally. She still had a year of school between her and oblivion.

"Is something on your mind?" she asked.

"No," he said, "I haven't had an engrossing thought in months."

They walked through the city after dinner. November was still and clear and painful at night. Jane huddled close to him.

"Do you like the cold?" she asked.

"Yeah, I guess I do," said Paul.

"Me to."

She kissed him when he dropped her off. He kissed her back after a moment, then turned to leave. He could have gone up to her room, he was fairly sure of that. He wondered why he didn't. The walk back to his car was freezing. The street at night was sterile, except for a siren off somewhere. He smoked a cigarette as he drove home.

He paused outside of his building. Inside there were a lot of blank canvasses, and a lot of canvasses that may as well have been blank. At one time he loved blank canvasses for the potential they

represented. Now they seemed to him like unfocused eyes. He didn't want to face them. He was sleepy, but he knew sleep would not come when he lay down. Paul pulled back the sleeve of his coat, exposing his pale arm. He gritted his teeth, and ground his cigarette out on his forearm. For a second he couldn't tell if it was hot or cold, only painful. After that he was wide-awake.

Diving Horses(Steel Pier Blues)

*My first visit to Atlantic City, Steel Pier
red August summer, 1954;
There was the smell of temptation in caramel corn,
And on display, big shiny new
Buicks and Pontiac automobiles,
and lovers casted away upon a ferris wheel star,
and familiar melodies swirled in ocean breezes,
from a carousel round and round,
and a swing orchestra in the giant ampitheater.
And then my father painted for me,
The most beautiful illusion of my childhood.
He told me,
 *"we're going to a show, my son,
 where the horses, they can fly"**

They laughed and cheered and screamed
At what a fragile child's eyes
saw as the unthinkable.
The fantasy was now theirs
to share and remember;
For what they believed could only come from
the absurd and spinning world of a child's imagination
Exploded
When once mature and aged eyes
That saw their way through the darkness
Of a long depression
Witnessed the magic and majesty of a horse's flight.

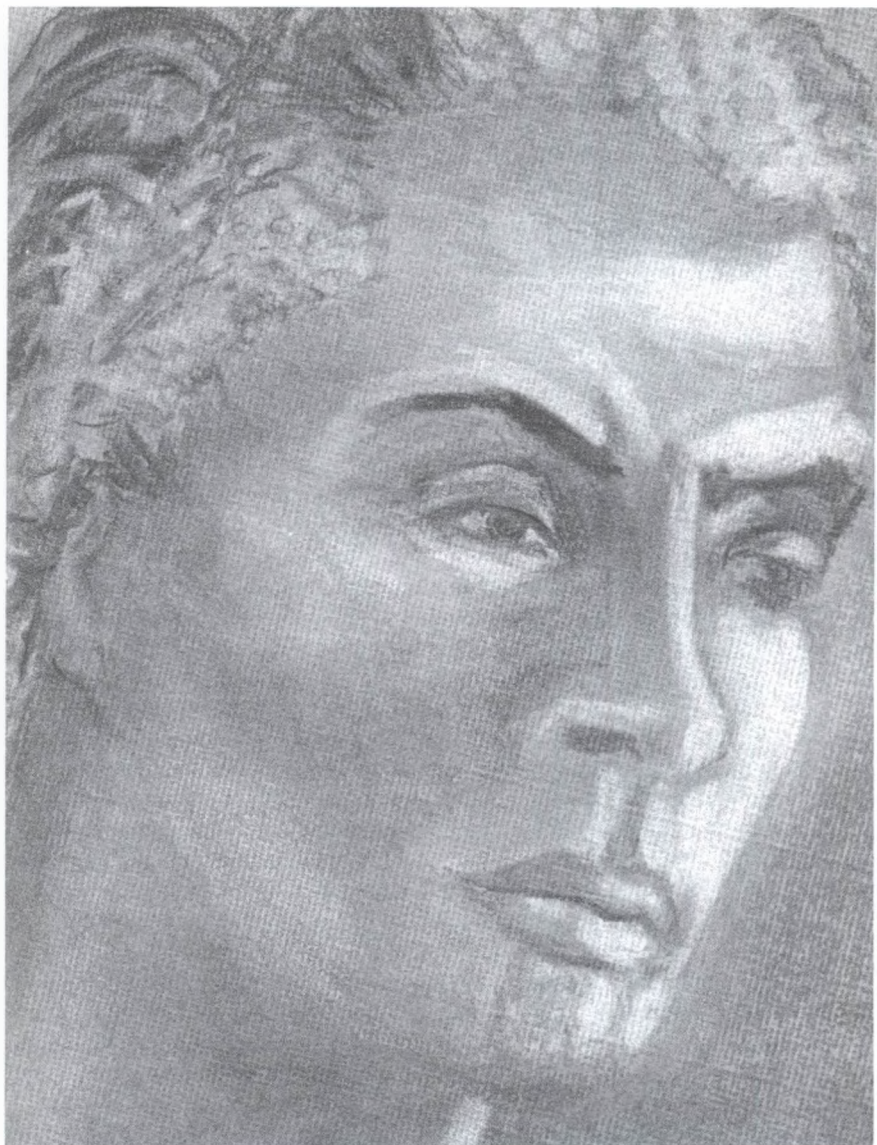
It was the insidious nature
of the iconoclasm in the sky
That brought a child's innocence,
Crashing into the sea
Never to resurface
Like a naïve, young Icarus.

*The horse was released from his perch,
Which he could hardly balance himself upon,
Twenty feet high and falling.
Jettisoned to remove the weight of guilt,
and navigated to his home in a shallow tank
which appeared so murky green and cold.*

Now there is a lost child
Amidst the orgasmic lull of the crowd,
whose uproar drowns a horse's mad screams;
And the sun's deeply intense afternoon glare
from the ever flowing tears of a lost child
Has made the world blind.
Again and again

*Soon much of the crowd departed
Returning to the madness of their ordinary lives,
while others eagerly awaited the evening show.
I wandered the beach to the water's edge
Looked out in the open and saw nothing.
I merely felt the beautiful dream
of my dancing barefoot childhood
Drifting further and further away.
So I closed my eyes for a moment,
and imagined
That all the "reds" could turn blue;
That the warmth of the sun could set the
oceans ablaze;
And that all horses could grow wings.*

Jim Lewis



Andre

Sandra MacLiammior

- 55 -

C u t t i n g S e a s o n

Lumbering along, he tried to keep speed with his charge, an AZ376 Lawn Hawk. Despite the heat and a suit of grass, he felt as if he were sleepwalking, with the monster mower pulling him along. Snapping his head at each swerve and bump, he tried to stay awake.

On a normal day, the thought of the rest that accompanied the noon break got him through the morning. But today, he lacked patience. He couldn't wait to finish this lawn, just so he could savor the five-minute ride to the next one. He had to sit down. Relax. Tired, sick, with head pounding, and body heavy, he gripped the mower tighter, keeping himself on this miserable march.

It was one wide path after another, cutting swath after swath. With each turn the machine tried to pull away from him. It would surge forward, threatening to buck him over the handlebars and over top the trees.

On his fifth turn, he lost it. The engine pushed ahead, pulling him over some cobblestone and through a small garden. Raging through, the mower rendered all the vegetables in the garden the same. Then his eyes rose in terror as he bore down on a mammoth rodent standing with arms upraised. It was gone in a millisecond, a critter obliterated. The blades and the engine had hardly changed their tune.

He cursed himself for giving it too much throttle. He almost cut the engine and went back to clean up Mr. Gnome's garden beaver, which lay in splitters in a fifteen foot radius. He would definitely hear about it. His current state, however, prevented him from caring about that and the blood dripping down his leg. It was easier to just keep moving.

At the end of the property, he was surprised by a gust of wind. Looking up, he saw its source; it was Tommy, flying by him on the "bearcat". He looked every bit the mad tank operator, zooming around on something that could probably eat a European compact.

He remembered the look of awe on Mr. Sherman's face when he saw the bearcats for the first time. It was in the lawn and garden section of a Colossal Hardware. Tommy and Jack had watched,

green-clad, as their boss merrily rushed to find a salesperson, so eager was he to make the purchase. Mr. Sherman was always exuberant when a buying trip came up. Knowing this, Tommy had helped pick out a chainsaw.

With another pass on the bearcat, Tommy made a scissors gesture. In his robotic stupor, Jack shut off the mower and went for the weed whacker.

The next property was all straight away, which meant that the bearcat could get to nearly everything. Firing up the weed whacker, he watched as Tommy churned through the jungle like undergrowth. The property was overtaken. The owner, after falling into bankruptcy, was evicted months ago. The bank was just now taking care of the place. As he walked waist high through overgrowth, Jack was beginning to expect vines and frigging Tarzan.

He was having trouble. The cord for the weed whacker had to be replaced three times. Insects bit and stung him as he walked through fields of poison ivy. Cutting through it, he ensured himself of two weeks of itchy misery, as poison ivy juices splashed all over him.

As Jack struggled with the weeds along the fence, he noticed that a small crowd had gathered. All the children next door had ceased playing and were now staring at the bearcat with something that approached religious awe. Their eyes grew as it took down everything, even small trees. Some stood back, fearing that it might suddenly deviate from its course and tear through the fence with those hungry blades. A set of razor sharp turbines were located on both sides of Tommy. To Jack, they seemed more like two packs of super-locusts.

There was enough damn nature here for a herd of gazelles, Jack thought. So, he was not surprised when he flushed out a pack of rabbits. With dismay, he watched as they ran through a path of fresh cut grass and back into the overgrowth, right into the bearcat's path. Frantically, he tried to draw Tommy's attention, but to no avail. Tommy zoomed on, course unchanged, mulching the rabbits at 40mph.

When the engine finally went silent, Jack was still standing close to where the rabbits were hit. A smattering of crimson was left. Turning, he saw that only two of the children were left. They were smiling.

He finished loading the trailer as Tommy waited in the truck. In the cab, he sat crumpled against a corner. With the pounding in his head, the noises of the equipment rattling around was amplified tenfold. While they sped along, he finally asked about the rabbits.

“Didn’t you see me waving to you”, he said.

Nothing.

“ Man, you must’ve taken out a whole family.”

“ Yeah, I saw you,” he said in low drone.

Then in a high fever pitch, he laughed and said, “ Way to flush ‘em out right to me. With kids there even, you cold bastard.”

It wasn’t long after dinner that he collapsed upon his bed. His tiredness made it feel like something that would hold him forever. His headache, though diminished, was still there. He now promised himself, as he had his mother before, that he would never hang out with Tommy again. At least, he would never go drinking with him again.

The alarm clock jolted him out of sleep in some early dark hour. Mindlessly, he went into the bathroom. Cold water on face, he stared into the mirror, not wanting to go through another workday. He didn’t wake up until after breakfast.

By the time Tommy picked him up, Jack was rather chipper. Seeing that, Tommy asked him to drive. He was in a bad state. Today was Tommy’s turn to be shitfull.

It wasn’t even a matter of Jack being an inexperienced driver. The truck and the rig behind it was bastard enough for anyone to haul. He was easily driving it 20mph less than Tommy normally did; he wondered how he held onto the damn hitch driving at such a speed.

Though Tommy relinquished the truck, he refused to yield the reins of the bearcat. So, as the day went on, Jack did not put his head down once as he went about his trim work. His unease never subsided. He refrained from shouting at Tommy to slow down; it was impossible for anybody to hear anything and he doubted that he would reduce speed even if he could. In disbelief, Jack watched

as he perfectly maneuvered through each path. With a sick feeling he watched him make every turn as clean as possible, for at every moment he appeared capable of flying madly off course.

They ended early for no good reason. Tommy told him of the Spaniards and how he desperately needed siesta time.

“ Its just another delinquent’s ex-property”, he said. “The bank’s giving us a week”.

It was four o’clock. Jack was tired also. Besides, if Mr. Sherman got upset, it wouldn’t be his fault. Also, it was Friday and he didn’t want to pass out before the night started.

When he picked Tommy up at eight, he was still sleeping. Banging on his window for a while, he finally woke from his sleep. A half-hour wait ensued and they were finally off.

They stopped at a beer distributor on route to a party. When Tommy came out with the beer, Jack told him to place it in the trunk. Tommy told him not to worry about getting pulled over by the police, but Jack insisted on the precaution.

The party was wild with insane music and even crazier people. When Jack was introduced, everyone asked him why he hadn’t been there the night before. Then he went to the kitchen where a fridge full of beer and liquor was presented to him. Hundreds of jello shots were lined up on the counter and on the floor was a drum of toxic punch. It was like they had been stockpiling for months. He grabbed a drink just before he was pulled away, with the music pumping overhead.

At three-thirty, he was yanked out of his stupor just as he was about to fall into sleep.

It was Tommy.

“We have to roll-party’s over,” he said.

Jack looked at him with tired eyes of disapproval.

“ We can’t stay here”.

“ I don’t want to go anywhere.”

“ We have to go,” Tommy said.

He tried his best to stay awake as they drove through pitch-black stretches. Though just on the outskirts, the roads leading into the suburbs made him feel that he was far removed from the city.

Rounding a curve, the lights began to increase, bathing the road with a cool white.

He concentrated on the white lines and cruised smoothly ahead. They passed a convenience store and Tommy suddenly awoke, asking for smokes. Jack, ignored him and drove on, hands cemented to the wheel. It was late. He had to get home. His parents would be mad enough.

Speeding along a straightaway, something suddenly came into their path. It was a five-point buck. It had come across a lawn from the community development on the left. Jack's eyes locked onto those of the creature. They were stuck in place. He hoped the brakes would work.

Tommy's head bounced off the windshield, cracking the glass and spraying blood in an instant. The steering wheel slammed into Jack's chest, jarring his internals. For that second and a half, they bounced around like monkeys in rolling barrel.

When it stopped, Jack looked over and in horror saw milky white eyes and a protruding tongue. Tommy was out and possibly dead. The deer lay silent at the front of the car.

He had to get out of here. That's all he could think. Pulling the car into reverse, it shifted backwards a bit. Before he could apply the gas, the deer rose up, slammed into the car, and leapt over the guardrail and into the woods of a neighborhood park. He stared in silence as it ran off .

He was jolted again as Tommy, in an instant, jumped up, slammed the door open, and ran off after the deer, with a mad scream bellowing through the night. Jack heard him crashing through the thickets and cursing each time they hindered his progress.

Jack didn't know what to do. He feared being found by the police. He feared his parents' reaction. Standing on the edge of the woods he yelled out. Looking back at the damage to the car, his hesitation broke. He vaulted the guardrail and dove into the woods.

Dave Terruso

connected to fit at our infinite split
pulled a p a r t at the top of the heart
petals kissed with melancholy bliss
the flower blooms in passion's gloom

stands tall
rises high
hued stem
the gem-

barricaded with the thorns of scorn
separated from each other, hanging in the wind
each surrounds itself with itself
the leaves are cleaved between the stem

resting on mangled roots strangling the dirt
they sprout out-healthy-happy-strong
gleaming green in this pristine meadow
the plants of romance land on the soil

mulch supplied with flowers that have died
moisturized with dewy tears
fertilized with crushed flowers
the ground, a round brown mound

(Note: This poem is read from the bottom to the top of the page.)

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